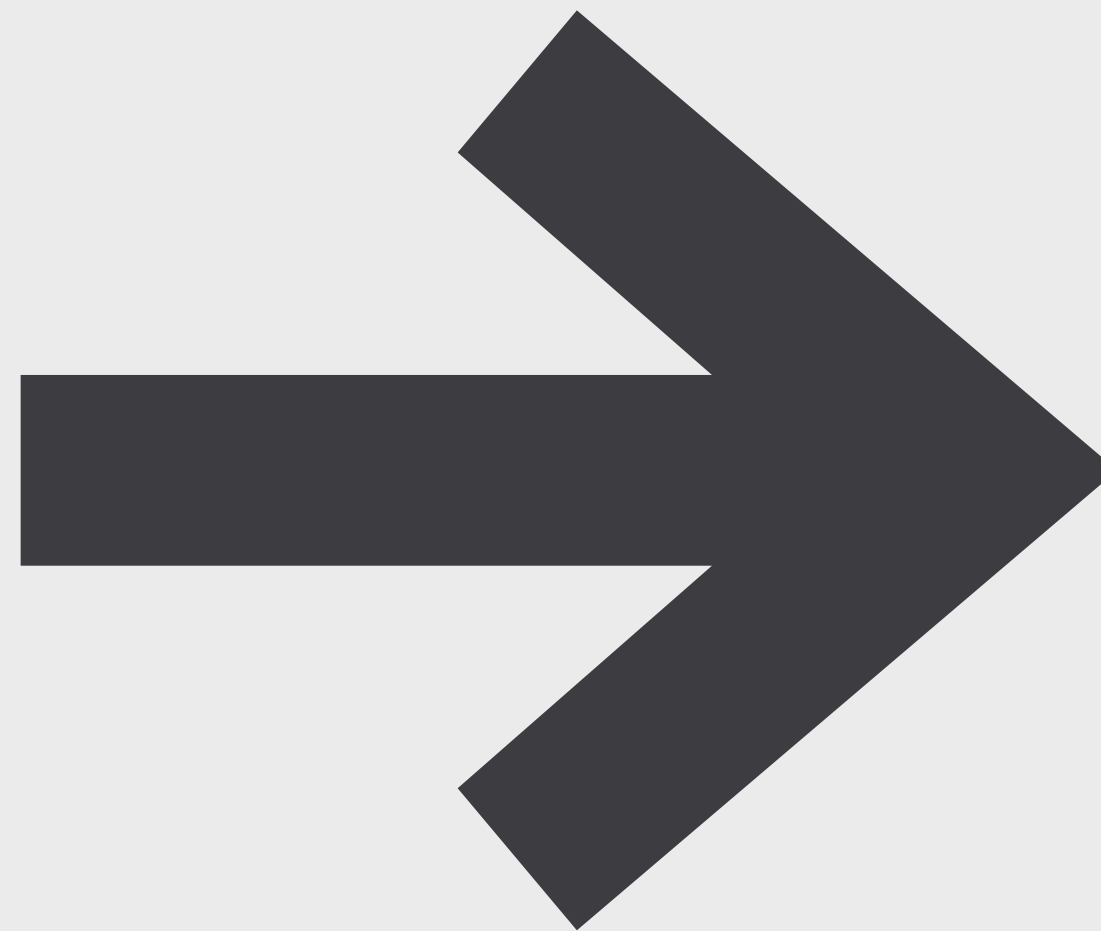


E-book series

Beyond the basics

How to evaluate your accounting business software





03 /

Preparing for growth

07 /

Identify what you want

12 /

Discover the tools to help you get there

16 /

Find the solution that's right for you

22 /

Put your solution into action

26 /

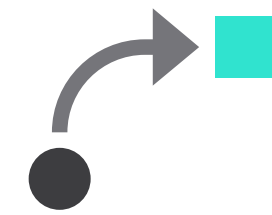
A checklist for success

From day one, your small business is constantly learning

Whether it's how to better compete in your market, what new tools and services can help support your organisation, or which local utility providers will offer the best deal, every new challenge presents an opportunity to adapt your business model and better position yourself for the future. But that doesn't mean learning is easy. Quite the opposite, in fact—change and adaptation are uncomfortable necessities, but it's that growth that helps accommodate who you hope to be in the future.

As your business grows, you take on responsibilities and expectations that your previous operations simply weren't designed to handle. At some point, the patterns and resources you've always relied on just don't quite work like they used to.

When that time comes, there are typically three ways to manage that growth:



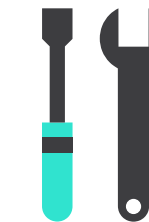
1. Ride it out

Some organisations hope to ride out those existing challenges with their current solution. If you identify with this, you may feel aimless, frustrated, or overwhelmed by this swell of new growth and hope that things will stabilise and resolve themselves.



2. Hire more people

While this approach is great for easing the initial strain of growth, hiring new people means providing for those individuals as well—benefits, salaries, even work space—and may not be an efficient or cost-effective solution.



3. Buy more tools

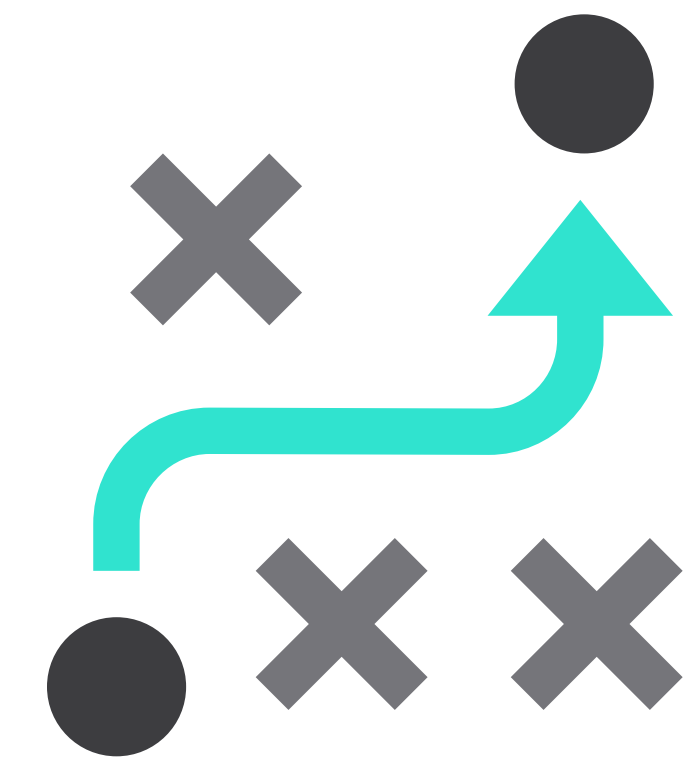
Here you may put together a mix-and-match set of services to keep your operation running. While each individual piece may work well independently, these solutions may struggle to work well together and require additional resources to manage, from backups, storage, data aggregation, management, and maintenance to training people to use those tools.

But what if there were a fourth option? What if you could take a step back and assess what you need from a holistic viewpoint?

4. Rethink your processes

Of these four options, rethinking your processes requires the most self-awareness. This means taking a step back and honestly assessing how your tools and operations work together. Do they help you grow or are they struggling to keep up?

By replacing your existing software with cloud-based business management tools, your organisation can adopt a comprehensive solution that adapts with you.



From reactive to proactive

what this mind-set means for your accounting and operations

As your company grows, your current software can start to hamper your productivity. While familiar, it ultimately limits your ability to realise your potential. Ignoring change is a natural reaction. Change is uncomfortable and foreign. But, when we shift mind-sets from reactive to proactive, we can capitalise on those changes and address

growing needs in a way that creates a competitive advantage and builds toward future success.

There is a powerful opportunity in learning how to move beyond your comfort limits and manage growth with confidence.

That process works in four stages:



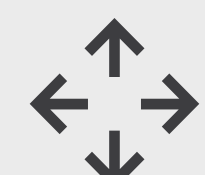
1. Identify what you want.



3. Find the solution that's right for you.



2. Discover the tools that can help.

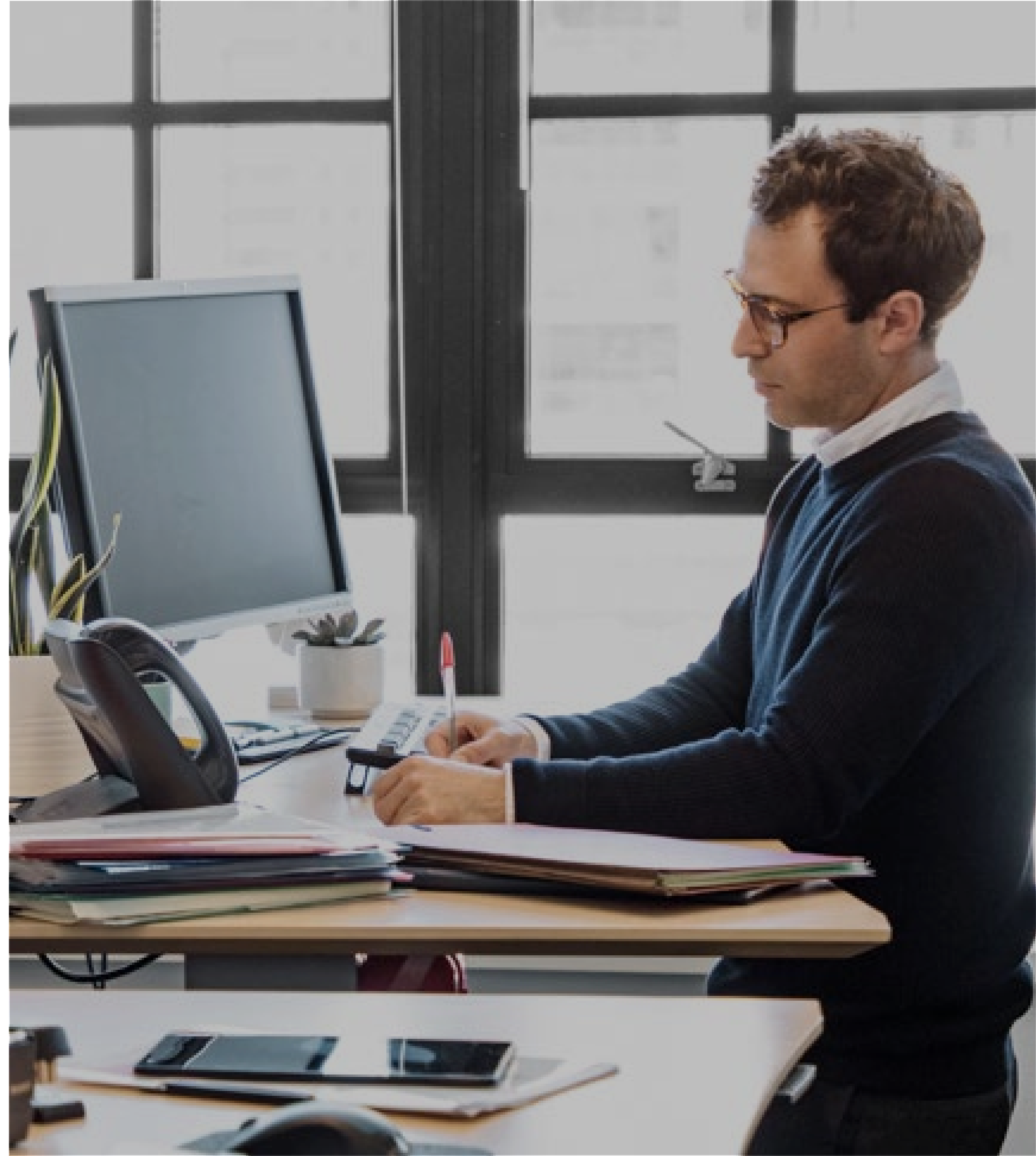


4. Act on your new solution.

Our goal is to help you walk through these four stages and find the right accounting solution for your unique circumstances.

Chapter 1

Identify what you want



Finding your ideal accounting solution starts with you

What's important to you? What do you expect out of your accounting software? By identifying what you want and, perhaps more importantly, what you *need*, you can better pinpoint a solution that meets your long-term goals.

What do you need from your ideal accounting solution?

Check the appropriate box. On a daily basis, I need my accounting software to:

	Yes	No	Somewhat
Connect multiple systems			
Simplify my operations			
Improve my data security and controls			
Make better use of my data			
Provide smarter financial and auditing tools			
Keep up with higher transaction volumes			
Integrate with other technology			
Work from different devices and locations			
Adapt to my business needs and industry standards			

Now, list some of the goals you have for your business moving forward

Do you want to open an online store? Perhaps you're considering going public, acquiring a competitor, or just want to simplify your IT responsibilities. What do you hope to accomplish as an organisation over the next five years?

After that, consider how your ideal accounting solution would help you achieve those ambitions. For example, if you're aiming to land a new round of funding in the next few years, then your ideal solution might consolidate your financial data, and use that information to create accessible reports that show your previous success and future growth trends.

Fill in your own goals. We've added a few ideas to get you started:

If I want to...	Then my software should...
Grow revenues	Handle 30% more transactions each month
Build a sales team	Support additional mobile users
Maintain a lean IT staff	Run on the cloud and be managed by the vendor



Countries	Dates
Mali	10
Nigeria	11
India	11
Vietnam	12
Kenya	12
Tanzania	1/18
Mexico	2/9

Many small business leaders struggle with their own limitations

Part of sustaining growth is being honest about what tasks you can handle and which you would be better served passing off to someone else. Sometimes this can mean hiring an expert or a contractor, but it also means finding tools that can automate many of your daily tasks.

Now that we know what you want, let's look at how you can get there.

Chapter 2

Discover the tools to help you get there



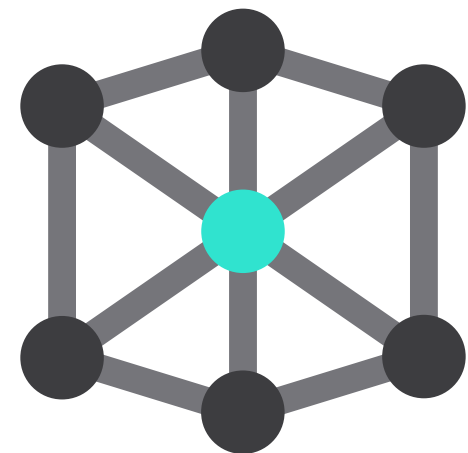


According to Deloitte research, SMBs that use an above average number of cloud services grow 26% faster, and are 21% more profitable (on average) than those that do not use cloud tools.¹

When choosing your ideal accounting solution, this stage is all about meeting those needs and goals that we discussed earlier. If we look solely at the size of your organisation, there's a good chance that cloud accounting software is the most suitable solution for your needs.

With the rise of cloud computing and software as a service (SaaS) solutions, organisations of all sizes can benefit from mobile, secure, and scalable technology without making huge investments in on-premise servers and solutions.

To help ease potential concerns, here are ten reasons to consider the cloud



1. Keep your data safe

With cloud services, you get more than just storage; you also get security. Not only do cloud solutions feature built-in redundancy to make sure your data's backups have backups, you also leverage your cloud partner's security investment—millions of dollars that someone else paid to ensure your data stays safe.

2. Connect your people, processes, and data

Get ahead of the competition with united, adaptable, and stable solutions that work together to connect your teams and streamline your operations.

3. Gain a complete picture of your business

By integrating your accounting data into a cloud solution, you can get real-time analytics and reporting to create an accurate and up-to-date picture of your organisation's habits and trends.

4. Improve cash flow

Cloud services typically operate on a monthly, per user license, so pay for what you need, and adapt as your business grows.

5. Eliminate hardware

Migrating to the cloud presents the opportunity to unload on-site servers and hard drive space, and eliminate the need to monitor and maintain these tools.

6. Remove your server responsibilities

By removing your server responsibilities, your IT team can focus on more value-added tasks like onboarding new employees and expanding your services.

7. Simplify mobility

Cloud access controls mean your team can securely work from home or in the field with the full capabilities of an on-site employees.

With the cloud you can manage quotes, orders, and projects from nearly anywhere.

8. Get started fast

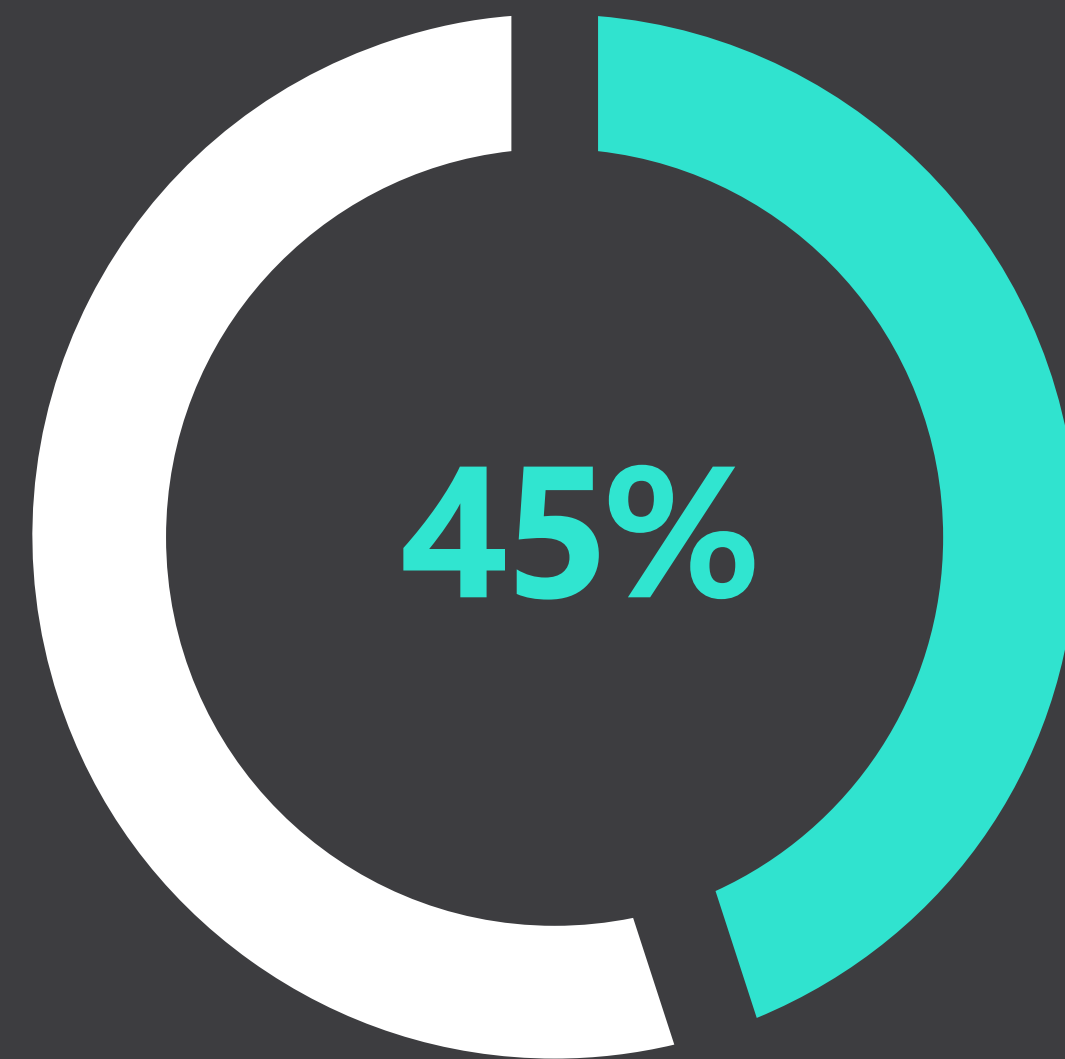
Because cloud solutions are managed by your partner, there's no hardware to set up or software to install—you can get started on day one.

9. Save time and money

Merge bookkeeping, inventory, sales management, and other tasks into a single solution that makes previously time-intensive responsibilities more efficient.

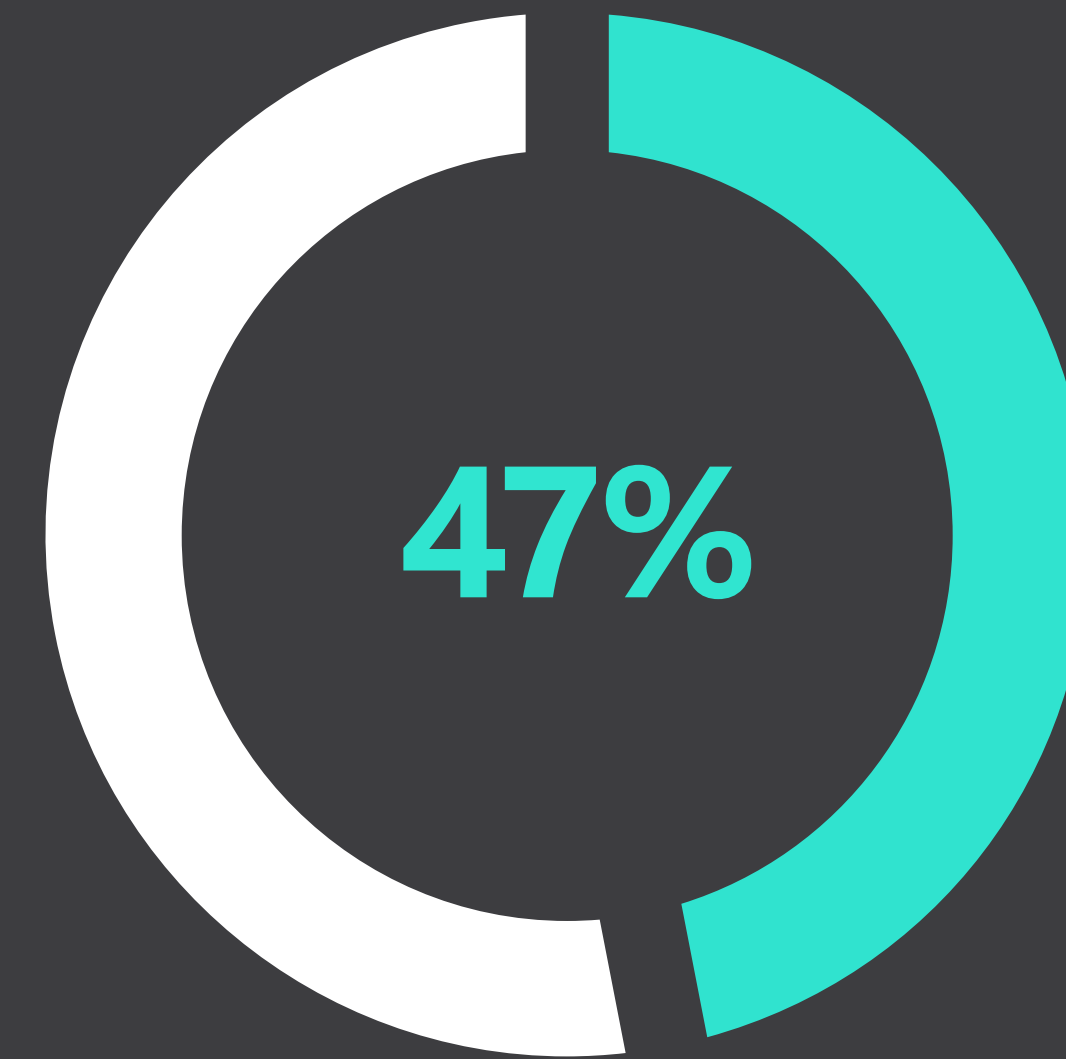
10. Scalability

For a growing business, the flexibility to pay for and use only what you need provides peace of mind that you'll always have the right service at the right time.



45% of SMBs say their employees get more done in the same amount of time thanks to cloud and mobile technologies.

Source: The Boston Consulting Group²



47% of SMBs say technology is critical to their company's future.

Source: The Boston Consulting Group²

Chapter 3

**Find the solution
that's right for you**



Evaluate your vendor as a partner. How do their services align to those goals you wrote down earlier?

When you weigh the different accounting solutions that are available, it's important to find a reputable vendor who is willing to support your adoption through training and education. Can they quickly assimilate with your operations and articulate how their service will help support your goals?

Vendor name	
How long in business?	
Market reputation	<input type="checkbox"/> Established and trusted <input type="checkbox"/> Known, but inconsistent performance <input type="checkbox"/> Not well known/never heard of this vendor
Customer support track record	<input type="checkbox"/> Able to provide success stories and accessible references <input type="checkbox"/> Offers in-person training <input type="checkbox"/> Provides on-site training & support materials <input type="checkbox"/> Values my loyalty as a customer <input type="checkbox"/> Acts and responds quickly
Pricing	<input type="checkbox"/> Monthly <input type="checkbox"/> Based on users <input type="checkbox"/> Based on usage <input type="checkbox"/> Flexible <input type="checkbox"/> Practically fits my budget
When was this solution first offered?	
How stable is the vendor? Is the solution at risk of becoming unsupported in the near future?	
Competitive differentiators	What I noticed/liked best about this solution/vendor:

It can be tough to know exactly what to ask your sales representative as you explore potential accounting solutions.

Here are a few places to start:

What would be our first-time and ongoing costs?

What is the process and typical time frame for getting set up?

What business processes can we handle out of the box with your software?

In what ways is the software intuitive and user-friendly?

Can I configure or customise the solution? How does that impact the price?

How does the software manage data access and functions by role?

Can we control updates and schedule them on our timeline?

Can we access the full capabilities of the solution on mobile devices?

Can we import our historical data?

Can the solution integrate with third-party applications/software?

It can be tough to know exactly what to ask your sales representative as you explore potential accounting solutions.

Here are a few places to start:

What must we do to integrate third-party software with your software?

How many users and transactions can you support concurrently?

What IT skills will we need to manage and update the software?

What standards are in place to keep my data safe (if relevant)?

What level of data control do you commit to in a service level agreement (if relevant)?

What are average response times if we're experiencing an issue with your solution?

Is your customer service on demand or by appointment only?

Can we get a free trial? If so, how many users does it support and for how long? What functionality will we be able to use?



We have cut out the paper, we are going paperless. We are very pleased with the system, information is king, it enables us to have a finger on the pulse all the time.

Brandauer

You've assessed your account software and vetted potential changes. Now it's time to compare your options.

Rate each vendor (1-5, 1 is bad, 5 is ideal) based on how they meet your needs.

	Vendor 1	Vendor 2	Vendor 3		Vendor 1	Vendor 2	Vendor 3
Easy to onboard				Eliminates data synchronisation issues			
Data is easy to access and analyse				Supports configurable workflow			
Database grows with my needs				Easy to use			
Supports high volume of transactions, records, and items				Easy to create and share reports			
Reliable audit controls				Vendor support			
Provides a consistent mobile experience				Integrates with Microsoft Office and other existing tools			
Meets capability requirements				Transparent and consistent pricing			
Integrates with third-party services				Your total:			

Live demos are an essential part of any decision. Ask your sales representative for a personalised demo to see how their service will work for your business.

Chapter 4

Put your solution into action



As you search for your ideal accounting solution, often the best approach is to try the service for yourself.



Many vendors offer free trials for potential customers, and these create a great opportunity to test run a potential solution. Keep in mind that sometimes free trials may only demonstrate a limited number of features.

To make the most of a free trial:



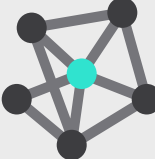
Define success in advance and know what you want out of the experience.



“Accidentally” delete something important, then follow the audit trail.



Share your vision with users of the trial and explain how they fit.



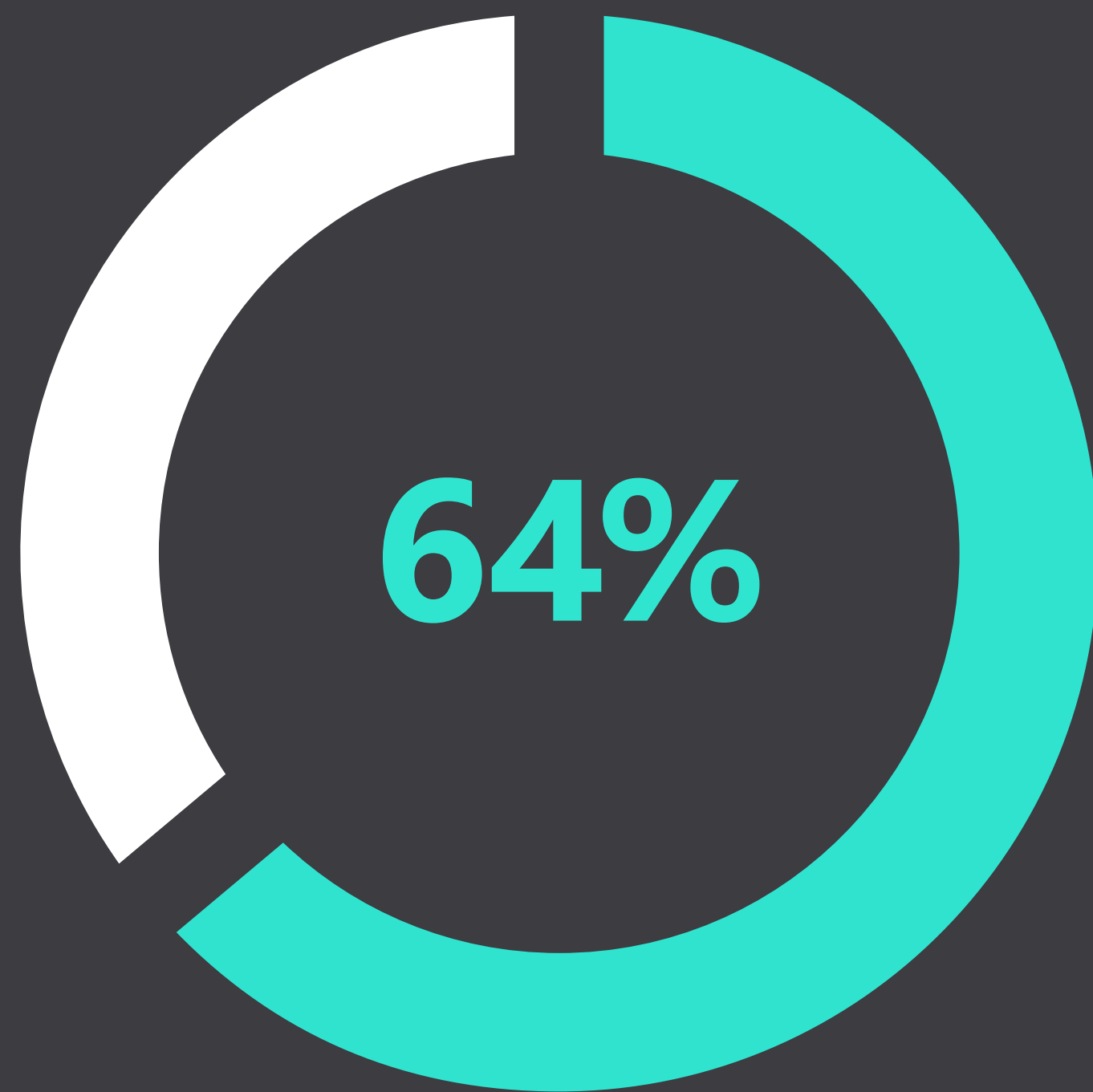
Stress test the solution—import your own data and see how it performs.



Evaluate the experience based on your goals.

Once you're done, rate each solution based on your experience:

	Exceptional	Acceptable	Poor	Does not suit our needs	N/A
Ease of use					
Permissions by role					
Capabilities needed					
Importing your data					
Record deletion/audit trail					
Ease of report generation					
Create custom reports					



64% of business owners consider personal trial and error to be the key factor that drives their confidence in a new product or service.⁴

Conclusion

A checklist for success



Taking a proactive approach to your future growth is a great way to reach your long-term goals.

When you know what you need, what's available, and what to ask, wading through the ocean of available accounting software to find your perfect solution is easier than it seems. We hope these tools will help as you sort through your options and find the right tools for your unique organisation.

Making the right decision for your business takes time, but you can grow with confidence when you:



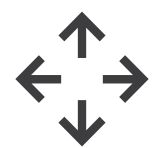
1. Know what you want



2. Discover what tools are available to help



3. Find what's right for you



4. Put your solution into action

To learn more about Microsoft's solution for small business owners, check out our e-book, [Beyond the Basics: Making Microsoft Dynamics 365 Business Central business management solution, or get in contact with us today.](#)

1 <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/global/Documents/Technology-Media-Telecommunications/gx-tmt-small-business-big-technology.pdf>

2 Financials—Business Owners Guide to Replacing Accounting Software.pdf

3 <http://info.microsoft.com/rs/157-GQE-382/images/dynamics365-en-reimagine-productivity.pdf>

4 <https://www.thealternativeboard.com/how-business-owners-make-buying-decisions>

One solution. Complete visibility.

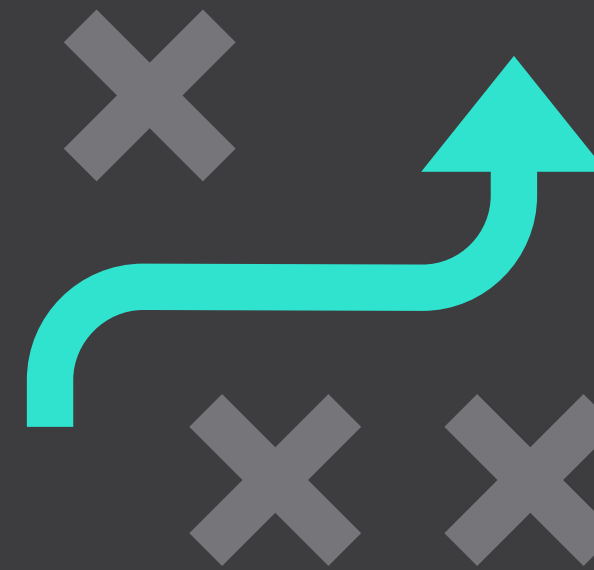
Technology Management helps Manufacturing and Distribution companies enhance performance with Microsoft Dynamics 365 Business Central (formerly known as Dynamics NAV), Dynamics 365 Customer Engagement and Office 365. Having delivered over 6,000 successful projects, we've plenty of experience implementing business systems, Microsoft Dynamics solutions and the technical infrastructure to support them.

Grow beyond the limits of your accounting software Microsoft Dynamics 365 solutions for small to mid-sized businesses cover finance, manufacturing, distribution, sales, marketing and customer service.

Use them all from within Microsoft Outlook for one single, integrated, easy to use business software solution.

Visit: www.tecman.co.uk/bc

Or to see Microsoft Dynamics 365 Business Central in action, register to our event at www.tecman.co.uk/events365.



Call: 01902 578 300
Email: hello@tecman.co.uk
Visit: www.tecman.co.uk

Technology Management
St Mark's Church
St Mark's Road
Wolverhampton WV3 0QH



Learn more about
Dynamics 365



Gold Enterprise Resource Planning
Gold Small and Midmarket Cloud Solutions
Gold Application Development
Silver Cloud Business Applications
Silver Cloud Platform
Silver Collaboration and Content
Silver Data Analytics

Microsoft Dynamics



Microsoft Azure

